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Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 CCO-00 /026 W
----------026389 312024Z /70
Z O 311947Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC FLASH 8991
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 4346

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PORG, UNSC, IS, LE
SUBJECT: SOUTH LEBANON: MOVE TO THE SOUTH

REF: JERUSALEM 2082

1. FINMIN BOUTROS ASKED ME TO COME BY HIS RESIDENCE AT 5:30 THIS AFTERNOON (JULY 31) TO DISCUSS SITUATION IN SOUTH LEBANON. ON MY ARRIVAL THERE HE SAID WE WERE WAITING FOR OFFICER FROM G-2 TO GIVE ME FULL BRIEFING AND IN MEANTIME HE WANTED TO TALK ABOUT SITUATION IN GENERAL. HE FELT THERE NO QUESTION THAT ISRAELIS WERE USING EVERY MEANS AT THEIR DISPOSAL IN ORDER PREVENT DEPLOYMENT LEBANESE TROOPS TO SOUTH. THEY WERE ALLEGING PROBLEM WITH HADDAD AND MILITIAS, BUT IN FACT THEY WERE MANIPULATING DIFFICULT SITUATION. EVERYONE'S PRESTIGE WAS ENGAGED. IF OPERATION TURNED OUT TO BE FAILURE IT WOULD REDOUND TO DISCREDIT OF U.S., FRANCE, UN AND LEBANON. IT WOULD BE PARTICULARLY UNFAVORABLE TO US BECAUSE WE WERE AUTHORS OF RESOLUTION 425 AND IT WAS WE WHO HAD PUT STRONGEST PRESSURES ON LEBANESE TO MOVE SOUTH.

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2. AFTER ABOUT HALF HOUR DURING WHICH WE FREQUENTLY DEBATED WHERE TO MOVE OUR CHAIRS TO PROTECT OURSELVES FROM SNIPER FIRE IN NEIGHBORHOOD, CAPTAIN ADNAN CHAABAN, A DRUZE WHO IS JOHNNY ABDO'S DEPUTY, ARRIVED TO BRIEF ME ON SITUATION AT KAWKABA, WHICH HE HAD LEFT ABOUT THREE P.M. TODAY. ACCORDING TO CHAABAN, COLUMN HAD MOVED SOUTH FROM ABLA TO BE GREETED

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WITH CHEERS AND EMOTIONAL MANIFESTATIONS BY INHABITANTS OF
EVERY VILLAGE THROUGH WHICH THEY PASSED. ALONG ROUTE
BETWEEN KFAR MISKI AND KAWKABA THERE WAS OCCASIONAL ANTI-
AIRCRAFT FIRE FROM PALESTINIAN GROUPS AGAINST LEBANESE AIRCRAFT
FLYING COVER, BUT NO FIRE AGAINST COLUMN ITSELF WHICH WAS BEING
LED BY SINGLE SYRIAN TRUCK. ON ARRIVAL AT HASBAYA ROAD JUNCTION,
WHERE ROUGHLY 1,000 LOCAL INHABITANTS WERE GATHERED TO
GREET THEM WITH GARLANDS AND KISSES, SHELLS BEGAN FALLING
AND GREETERS DISPERSED IN GREAT HURRY. MINUTES LATER THEY
ARRIVED AT KAWKABA ROAD JUNCTION WHERE THEY WERE MET BY
NEPALESE COMMANDER AT UNIFIL ROAD BLOCK.

3. LEBANESE HAD EXPECTED TO BE MET BY UNIFIL ESCORT AT THIS
POINT IN CONCURRENCE WITH ARRANGEMENTS WORKED OUT EARLIER.
THERE WAS NO ESCORT, HOWEVER AND SO THEY BEGAN TO DISCUSS
SITUATION WITH NEPALESE COMMANDER WHO REPORTED THAT ROAD TO
SOUTH WAS MINED. SHORTLY THEREAFTER UNIFIL ESCORT
DETAIL LED BY COL. RANA OF NEPALESE DETACHMENT ARRIVED BY
HELICOPTER, SAYING THEY UNABLE TO COME BY ROAD BECAUSE IT
WAS MINED AT MARJAYOUN-IBL AS-SAQI JUNCTION. MAJOR HADDAD'S
FORCES ALSO HAD A ROAD BLOCK THERE. DISCUSSION ENSUED
AS TO HOW TO DEAL WITH QUESTION AND MATTER REFERRED
TO BEIRUT. BASICALLY LEBANESE SAW THREE OPTIONS: (A) FORCE
THE MINES AND THE ROAD BLOCK; (B) REMAIN IN KAWKABA
AND TRY TO NEGOTIATE ARRANGEMENT; (C) WITHDRAW. CAPTAIN
CHAABAN SAID GENERAL KHOURY FAVORED FIRST ALTERNATIVE.
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IN MEANTIME THEY HAD DECIDED TO BIVOUAC FOR THE NIGHT
IN THE VICINITY. THREE HUNDRED MEN WERE MOVING IN
WITH THE NEPALESE AT KAWKABA AND TWO HUNDRED WITH THE
NORWEGIANS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ROAD. THEY COULD MAINTAIN
THIS POSITION FOR ONE DAY--MAYBE TWO--BUT THEN THEY WOULD HAVE
TO MOVE ELSEWHERE. KAWKABA POSITION IN PARTICULAR WAS UNTENABLE
BECAUSE THEY WERE SURROUNDED BY REJECTIONISTS OF ALL
COLORS, INCLUDING BADER MEINHOF GANG, WHILE TO SOUTH THEY
WERE SUBJECTED TO FIRE FROM MARJAYOUN.

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4. I THEN QUIZZED CHAABAN CLOSELY ON WHO WAS DOING THE FIRING AND WHO WAS LAYING THE MINES. I ASKED HOW THEY KNEW THAT IT WAS ISRAELIS WHO HAD MINED THE ROAD. CHAABAN SAID, "WE HAVE OUR PEOPLE IN THE AREA WHO HAVE TOLD US." I THEN QUESTIONED WHO WAS DIRECTING ARTILLERY FIRE. WAS IT HADDAD OR WAS IT ISRAELIS? BOTH CHAABAN AND BOUTROS SAID THAT IF IT WAS HADDAD, HE WAS DOING IT UNDER ISRAELI PRESSURE. I SAID THERE WAS OBVIOUS DISAGREEMENT AS TO WHETHER HADDAD HAD ACCEPTED OFFER MADE BY LEBANESE. CHAABAN SAID THERE WAS NO QUESTION BUT THAT HE HAD ACCEPTED IT. THEY HAD HAD FREQUENT CONTACTS WITH HIM OVER THE PAST MONTH OR TWO AND THEY WERE CERTAIN HE WAS ON BOARD. HADDAD WANTED TO GET OUT BUT WAS A PRISONER OF THE ISRAELIS. IT WAS INCONCEIVABLE THAT HADDAD WOULD WILLINGLY FIRE ON UNITS OF LEBANESE ARMY, BECAUSE IT WOULD MEAN THE END OF ANY HOPE ON HIS PART FOR A FUTURE IN LEBANON.

5. I SUBSEQUENTLY REVIEWED THIS CONVERSATION WITH OUR DATT WHO SUGGESTED THAT ONE ALTERNATIVE LEBANESE MIGHT HAVE WOULD BE TO FERRY TROOPS FROM KAWKABA TO TIBNIN BY HELI-
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COPTER. I LATER MENTIONED THIS TO BOUTROS ON THE TELEPHONE AND HE NOTED THAT THIS WOULD IMPLY THAT QUESTION OF HADDAD WAS UNRESOLVED AND WOULD IMPLY LEBANESE UNABLE TO ASSERT THEIR AUTHORITY THROUGH THEIR SOVEREIGN TERRITORY. HE WOULD DISCUSS IDEA WITH GENERAL KHOURY, HOWEVER.

6. COMMENT. OBVIOUS QUESTION OUT OF THIS ACCOUNT AND REPORTING FROM JERUSALEM AND TEL AVIV IS WHETHER OR NOT ISRAELIS ARE BLOCKING THE MOVE OR WHETHER IT IS HADDAD AND WHETHER HADDAD IS FREE AGENT OR BEING MANIPULATED BY ISRAELIS. LEBANESE, OF COURSE, SUBSCRIBE TO THEORY THAT HADDAD IS BEING MANIPULATED BY ISRAELIS AND THAT HE REALLY WANTS TO GET OUT AND IS

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PREPARED TO ACCEPT WHAT LEBANESE HAVE OFFERED HIM. THEY
POINT TO UBIQUITOUS MIZRACHI AS EVIDENCE OF ISRAELI CONTROL
OF HADDAD, WHO IS NEVERTHELESS SINCERE LEBANESE WHO
REALLY DOES NOT WANT TO BE UNDER ISRAELI THUMB. ON OTHER
HAND, I NOTE UNIFIL REPORTING IN FERUSALEM'S 2082 THAT UN
BELIEVES MINING OF THE ROAD WAS DONE BY HADDAD. ALSO
UNDERSTAND FROM SAUNDERS THAT IT CLEAR TO UN OBSERVERS
THAT ARTILLERY FIRE DIRECTED AT LEBANESE UNIT AND AT UNIFIL
UNITS IN KAWKABA-HASBAYA AREA IS COMING FROM MARJAYOUN.
THE LEBANESE SAY THERE ARE NO MILITIAS IN MARJAYOUN AND
WE PRESUME THERE IS NO ISRAELI ARTILLERY THERE. IMPLICATION
IS THAT SOMEBODY FROM AONG HADDAD'S FOLLOWERS IS DOING THE
SHOOTING. ALTHOUGH ABDO AND BOUTROS TELL ME THAT HADDAD HAS
ACCEPTED LEBANESE PROPOSITION, I HAVE NO WAY OF PROVING IT.
THEY HAVE GIVEN ME VARIOUS CIRCUMSTANTIAL ARGUMENTS TO SUPPORT
THEIR CONTENTION, BUT GIVEN GENERALLY HALF-ASSED WAY IN WHICH
THIS WHOLE OPERATION HAS BEEN CONDUCTED, I AM NOT SURE OF
ANYTHING LEBANESE ARE TELLING ME.

7. FOLLOWING DICTATION OF ABOVE HAVE TALKED TO DRAPER AND
CRAWFORD ON SECURE VOICE TELEPHONE. CONCUR IN WHAT I UNDERSTAND
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TO BE SAM LEWIS'S RECOMMENDATION THAT WE SHOULD ENCOURAGE
LEBANESE TO TRY TO NEGOTIATE WAY OUT USING UNIFIL GOOD OFFICES.
LEVEL OF COMPETENCE WHICH THAT ORGANIZATION HAS DISPLAYED TO DATE
IN DEALING WITH THIS AFFAIR DOES NOT INSPIRE GREAT CONFIDENCE,
HOWEVER, AND LEBANESE IN PARTICULAR ARE GOING TO EXPECT US
RATHER THAN UNIFIL TO LEAD THEM THROUGH THE WOODS.
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